



September 8, 2007

Assemblymember John Laird
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0027

Dear Assemblymember Laird:

Thank you for your inquiry about the Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM), and the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) plan to begin aerial application of pheromones in an effort to control this pest. NRDC scientists have investigated the planned application, and reviewed the available data on the pheromone products (CheckMate OLR-F and CheckMate LBAM F) that will be used. At this time, we believe that the CDFA plan appears to be sound and is the safest and most effective approach. Therefore NRDC supports the plan.

As you know, NRDC is on record opposing most aerial applications of pesticides. Instead, we favor methods that rely on the principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). For example, we have frequently opposed the widespread use of toxic insecticides and advocated for use of pheromones instead. Therefore, we applaud CDFA's decision to use an approach to the LBAM that relies on the principles of IPM and that uses a pheromone-based approach instead of toxic insecticides. We hope that the prompt use of such a strategy will help to avert future use of insecticides to control this pest. The products that will be used do not contain toxic insecticides. Instead they contain a chemical that is essentially a specific perfume that acts as an attractant for male Light Brown Apple Moths. The male moths will fly around pursuing the scent of females, and will ultimately die of natural causes before they succeed in locating a real female moth.

The pheromone is unlikely to have any effects on humans, and the documentation we have received from CDFA states that the product is mixed only with water and urea, neither of which will have toxic effects on humans or other animals. We understand that many people in the areas that are proposed to be treated are quite concerned, and we are receiving phone calls from our members about this issue. It does indeed appear alarming to have something sprayed in the air over your community. However, in this case, we believe that the concerns reflect a misunderstanding about the plan, rather than a real health-based issue. Communities that have experienced aerial spraying of insecticides in the past may be rightly suspicious and concerned. Fortunately, in this case, CDFA has chosen a different path, and should be commended for designing a program that relies on non-toxic methods.

Sincerely,

Gina M. Solomon, M.D., M.P.H.
Senior Scientist